



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Ambassador James Schumaker, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 30, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to extend our warmest welcome to Mr. Jim Schumaker, a good colleague and friend of many of us here. I especially want to thank you and your very fine staff in Kiev for the hospitality you all showed me during my visit there three weeks ago.

Your visit back to the Permanent Council comes at an auspicious time, right now after the Ukrainian parliamentary elections, which were held freely, fairly, and peacefully.

Credit for the good election goes first and foremost to the government, the Rada and the Ukrainian people themselves. Also critical was the work the PCU has done over the past year on such crucial issues as the voter registration lists; these efforts obviously played an important role as well. We support strongly the PCU's proposal to continue its work with this project.

The United States will continue to be one of the leading extra-budgetary contributors for programs in Ukraine. These programs have already done much to help the government achieve the goals it has set for itself, consistent with its OSCE commitments, in promoting free and fair elections, the rule of law, good governance, independent media and anti-trafficking efforts.

In this regard, Mr. Chairman, the United States would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate its support for the decision by Ukraine to implement the customs agreement it signed last December 30th with Moldova. Implementation of the Customs Protocol is an important step toward secure borders and could play a key role in eventually resolving regional conflicts. The suggestion by some (principally but not exclusively the authorities in Tiraspol) that implementation of this protocol amounts to an economic blockade, is excessive and without foundation. Tiraspol's economic isolation is entirely self-imposed. We hope the authorities in Transnistria will soon allow their people to engage fully in lawful, transparent trade with democratic neighbors like Ukraine.

With the kind of political will Ukraine has already demonstrated, I am confident you and your staff will be able to make even greater strides in the year ahead.

This is the kind of work the OSCE was meant to do. We can all take some pride in the tremendous progress that Ukraine has made. We should work together to make that a reality throughout the OSCE region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.